

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 KHARTO 01449 011048Z

ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15

ICA-11 TRSE-00 SSM-03 /077 W

-----075012 020229Z /75T

R 010857Z APR 78

FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6968

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

S E C R E T KHARTOUM 1449

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PGOV, PINS, PINT, SU

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTER RASHID AL-TAHIR AND V-P ABUL GASSIM

1. SECRET RIVALRY BETWEEN VP AND FONMIN RASHID AL-TAHIR BAKR AND FIRST VP AND SSU SEC GEN ABUL GASSEM IBRAHIM APPEARS TO BECOMING EMBITTERED. THERE ARE DARK RUMORS IN KHARTOUM THAT RASHID IS IN EMPLOY OF EGYPTIAN INTELLIGENCE, ON ONE HAND, AND THAT ABUL GASSEM IS "QADDAFI'S MAN IN KHARTOUM" ON OTHER. IN SHORT RUN NIMEIRI'S OWN POSITION APPEARS SECURE AND TI POSSIBLE RUMORS ARE OVERDRAWN. HOWEVER, WE THINK RIVALRY BETWEEN ABUL GASSEM AND RASHID IS REAL AND IT PROBABLY IS TRUE THAT RASHID WHO IS RATHER CLOSE TO EGYPTIANS IS CONCERNED OVER WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING IN TRIPOLI RECENTLY BETWEEN ABUL GASSEM AND QADDAFI.

2. ABUL GASSEM, WHO JUST RETURNED FROM SEBHA CONFERENCE, IS RECEIVING MUCH PUBLICITY FOR HIS ACHIEVEMENTS THERE. SIMULTANEOUSLY RASHID, IN CAIRO AS PRESIDENT OF ARAB LEAGUE COUNCIL, IS GETTING FAVORABLE PUBLICITY FOR HIS DIPLOMATIC ENDEAVORS. THIS BATTLE OF PUBLICITY IS HARM-

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PAGE 02 KHARTO 01449 011048Z

LESS INDICATION OF INTENSE SECRET RIVALRY BETWEEN RASHID AND ABUL GASSEM. ALTHOUGH TWO HAVE NEVER BEEN FRIENDS, PRESENT FRACAS STARTED WHEN RASHID PERCEIVED THAT ABUL GASSEM WAS TAKING OVER SEVERAL KEY FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS: LIBYA, ETHIOPIA, PERHAPS USSR.

3. AT SEBHA, QADDAFI SPENT FIVE HOURS ALONE WITH ABUL GASSEM SOON AFTER QADDAFI'S ARRIVAL AT CONFERENCE. ABUL

GASSEM AND QADDAFI ARE SAID TO BE CLOSE FRIENDS WHO TRUST ONE ANOTHER, WHICH IS WHY LIBYANS DID NOT WANT RASHID TO REPRESENT SUDAN IN BILATERAL ACTIVITIES. AS ABUL GASSEM WORKS CLOSELY WITH QADDAFI, RASHID HAS DRAWN CLOSER TO EGYPTIANS. NIMEIRI FAVORS ABUL GASSEM PERSONALLY AND DOES NOT LIKE RASHID.

4. RASHID HELPED START MOSLEM BROTHERHOOD IN SUDAN, LATER JOINED NATIONAL UNION PARTY, AND DURING GENERAL ABBOD REGIME WAS JAILED FOR PLANNING TO LEAD COUP ATTEMPT. HE IS CONSERVATIVE MOSLEM AND AMBITIOUS. ABUL GASSEM CAN BE SUMMED UP AS THUG TO WHOM NIMEIRI OWES HIS LIFE AND REGIME SEVERAL TIMES OVER. ABUL GASSEM'S ALLEGED CLOSENESS TO QADDAFI IS CONSISTENT WITH RESULTS OF SEBHA CONFERENCE, WHICH COULD HAVE DICTATED BY QADDAFI. RUMORS PERSIST ABOUT RASHID'S CONNECTIONS WITH EGYPTIAN INTELLIGENCE.

5. NEITHER MAN IS PARTICULARLY WELL LIKED OR HIGHLY REGARDED IN KHARTOUM. EACH IN HIS OWN WAY HAS REPUTATION OF BEING OPPORTUNIST AND ABUL GASSEM, AT LEAST IS ALLEGEDLY ONE OF MOST CORRUPT SENIOR SUDANGOV OFFICIALS. THERE ARE LONGSTANDING RUMORS THAT ONE OF BOTH WILL BE DROPPED SOON BY NIMEIRI, BUT, THEY ARE HANGING ON AND ARE STILL IN OFFICE. WE THINK NIMEIRI IS WELL AWARE OF RIVALRIES AND PROBABLY REALIZES THAT THERE COULD BE PROBLEMS IF ABUL GASSEM AND RASHID CLASHED OPENLY. HOWEVER, HE WOULD NOT BE FIRST PRESIDENT TO ALLOW SOME HEALTHY INTERNAL FIGHTING AMONG HIS FOLLOWERS AS PART OF LARGER EFFORT TO ASSURE HIS OWN PRIMACY.

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SECRET

PAGE 03 KHARTO 01449 011048Z

BERGUS

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Message Attributes

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Draft Date: 01 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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